

Each time I hear a president speak to a Joint Session of Congress I am reminded of past presidents rallying the nation to greatness. President Obama sought to similarly inspire Americans with his State of the Union speech last week, evoking memories of the space race and our ability to accomplish anything when we work together. But in my view, he failed to demonstrate the leadership the American people expect at this critical time of high unemployment and unsustainable federal debt.

Historically, State of the Union addresses have not been known for their memorable lines as much as for building political momentum. President Obama's speech, unfortunately, failed to deliver either. It was simply an attempt to repackage the same big spending agenda that has been articulated before.

For a president who has directed two straight years of trillion dollar- plus federal budget deficits – the highest in our country's history – he fell short in his ability to connect with the struggles of the average American.

“Every day, families sacrifice to live within their means. □ They deserve a government that does the same. □ So tonight, I am proposing that starting this year, we freeze annual domestic spending for the next five years,” the president said.

However, his record doesn't agree. Under his plan there will be little sacrifice for Washington's bloated budget.

A freeze at current year levels is roughly \$100 billion more in discretionary spending than in 2008.

It was exactly one year ago that President Obama called for a three-year spending freeze. Yet, since the president has taken office, federal spending has increased by an astounding 84 percent.

Remember the \$787 billion stimulus?

Our nation cannot dig itself out of debt by continuing to borrow money we don't have to fuel our ongoing and unrealistic spending habits.

Yet, this is exactly what the president is pledging.

Admittedly, it's not enough to criticize the president without offering concrete alternative action. That's why, on the same day as the president's speech, I joined my fellow House Republicans in voting to direct House committees to roll back federal non-security discretionary spending to 2008 levels.

In addition, we will continue our push for the repeal of the president's costly and unconstitutional health care law.

The House-passed repeal awaits a vote in the Senate.

In its place, Republicans are now working on targeted health care reforms that Americans actually support, including market based reforms that will allow greater access to insurance, lower premiums and the protection of benefits for those with pre-existing conditions.

While the American people were looking for signs the president finally understands the gravity of our current fiscal crisis, sadly, he answered with more of the same –bigger government. The three stimulus programs totaling nearly \$1 trillion since President Obama has taken office have done little to lower unemployment and there is very little appetite among the American people to spend more money on programs that only add to our mountainous federal debt.

A fundamental fact the president and his party seemingly refuse to accept is that government doesn't create jobs, businesses do. By promoting a climate of more government regulation and debt, the president undermines the confidence of America's jobs creators, small business.

Alabama's unemployment edged up slightly last month and the national unemployment rate remains at 9.4 percent.

A Heritage Foundation study uncovered at least 43 major regulations imposed on business during fiscal year 2010 alone, costing \$26.5 billion – the highest level since 1981.

In addition to promoting continued government spending, the president returned to his previous theme of so-called green energy at the expense of existing cheaper fuel sources. Most notable was his omission of any reference to continued oil drilling and exploration.

While those of us on the Gulf Coast painfully realize that oil production comes with risks, we also know it would be irresponsible to abandon domestic resources in favor of costly and as yet unproven alternatives.

A policy of safe and accountable oil and gas drilling as our nation develops additional energy sources is what is needed, not radical departures, which drive up the cost of energy for everyone.

Speaking of the Gulf Coast, I was also disappointed the president failed to make any mention of the Gulf oil spill in his speech. It was no small oversight to leave out the largest environmental disaster to strike our country and one that continues to have significant and detrimental impacts on our local and regional economies. While the president did find time to discuss taking on the oil companies, those of us on the Gulf Coast were left feeling forgotten again.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.